

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Leo Varadkar of Ireland and an Exchange With Reporters

March 17, 2023

President Biden. Welcome. And it's good to have you back in the Oval Office, Taoiseach, you know, especially on St. Patrick's Day. And it's a big day in my grandparents' household, our household, a big day here, and I know a bigger day at home. But thank you very much.

And you know, there is a—Yeats's phrase about, you know, you think there is more—where a man's most glory begins and ends is the glory to have such friends. Well, you've been a great friend. You've been a great friend to the United States.

And Ireland and the United States share friendship and long, long traditions. And I don't—I guess you do know, coming here as many times as you have, how many Americans look forward to St. Patrick's Day.

And one of the—as millions of Americans of Irish heritage, we have a joke. And we have an event that I used to do as Vice President, and it's now done up in the Hill, which it says, "We invite all of the friends of Ireland, all the Irish Members of the Congress, and those that wish they were."

So—but you know, I want to thank you on a substantive matter: standing together on Ukraine. It's—it means a great deal speaking out against Russia's brutal aggression. And our deepening economic ties. We have a lot to talk about.

And you know, I've spent some time with the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and I've very much—very strongly supported the "Windsor Framework," which I know you do too. Maybe we'll get a chance to talk about that.

And, for us, the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement is something that a very good friend of mine devoted a lot of his life to, George Mitchell, and we—that's critical.

So I'm looking forward to meeting you and having our celebration together, and a lot to talk about.

The floor is yours.

Prime Minister Varadkar. Thank you. Thank you, President.

[At this point, Prime Minister Varadkar spoke in Irish; no translation was provided. He then continued in English as follows.]

So, first of all, thanks so much for inviting me to be here. I really appreciate the invitation. I really want to thank you for your help and support and understanding for our position on Brexit in recent years. It really made a difference. And we've got to a good place now, I think, with the "Windsor Framework," where we can have an agreement that lasts, which is important for Northern Ireland and also important for British, Irish, and European relations

I really profoundly want to thank you and America for your leadership in relation to Ukraine. I never thought we'd see a war like this happen in Europe in my lifetime. And America is at its best when it stands with its European partners to defend freedom and democracy. And thank you for that. And I know you'll stay the course for us—with us, and we'll stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes.

And also, really looking forward to your visit. I promise you that we're going to roll out the red carpet, and it's going to be a visit like no other. Everyone is excited about it already. We're going to have great crowds who would love to see you. And look forward to talking about some of the details a bit later.

President Biden. I look forward to that as well.

Thank you all.

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

President Biden's Potential Travel to Ireland

Q. President, when are you coming to Ireland? What date?

President Biden. Soon.

Q. Taoiseach, do you have a date for the President's visit?

Prime Minister Varadkar. I think the President will announce that in due course.

Q. President Biden, will you be coming to your ancestral home in Mayo?

President Biden. Don't know yet.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of United Kingdom; and former Sen. George J. Mitchell, in his former capacity as U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Ireland, Prime Minister Varadkar.

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